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An Address
by

M^cDaniel, James W.
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Class 5415

Book 26414

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

Funeral of Capt. William F. Brigham,

In Feltonville, Mass., Feb. 18, 1865,

BY

SAMUEL W. McDANIEL.

Printed by request.

FELTONVILLE:

CHAS. A. WOOD, BOOK, CARD AND JOB PRINTER.

1865.

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"Oh, fallen in manhood's fairest noon,—
We will remember, 'mid our sighs,
He never yields his life too soon,
For Country and for Right who dies."

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ADDRESS.

"FOR DEATH COMETH THROUGH OUR WINDOWS, IT ENTERETH OUR PALACES; IT CUTTETH OFF THE CHILDREN FROM THE STREET, AND THE YOUNG MEN FROM THE PUBLIC PLACES." Jer. IX ch.: 21 verse.

How striking and affecting the contrast between the scene we behold to-day, and that which we beheld on that bright and beautiful day of August, 1862, when he whose lifeless form lies before us, stood upon our public square with his soldier-comrades, and received the tearful farewells of this community!

In that group of gallant volunteers for Union and Freedom, none were more enthusiastic and devoted, none carried to the defense of the imperilled cause a clearer head, a braver arm, or a better heart.

He had eloquently invoked the patriotic self-denial of our young men, and when they seemed to hesitate for a leader he showed that he understood the eloquence of action as well as of speech. Promptly, cheerfully, eagerly he pledged his services in a military capacity, and from the hour of his enlistment he gave his entire time and energies to the recruitment of a company from this neighborhood for the U. S. Army. I speak from personal observation when I testify to the earnestness and alacrity with which he committed himself to the sacred duties which he then undertook.

It was generally conceded that we were sending forth one of our choicest spirits, of whom we could say, without disparagement to any, his natural gifts, culture, social position and prospects might fairly tempt him to contemplate from afar the sufferings and perils of a soldier's life and to desire exemption from the risk of meeting a soldier's death and filling a soldier's grave.

I seem to see him as he listened on that day of parting to the words of respect, congratulation and benediction which fell from the lips of him who then ministered to another religious society in this village and for whom the deceased always entertained high regard, and also from him whose lot it is to to-day to speak another and a longer farewell!

And it requires but little effort to recall his modest but fervent reply, in which he promised to bring no discredit upon the dear friends he was about to leave, nor upon the fair fame of his native town and State.

Of a commanding personal appearance, robust frame, vigorous constitution, and temperate habits, we could not but hope, if he escaped the bullets of the foe, he might return unscathed to the home of his fathers, and after a long life of usefulness, rest amid his kindred. Two and a half years have transpired since his departure for the seat of war,—a short period as men reckon time—but could those speechless lips articulate they might tell us how crowded those months have been with the incessant exactions of duty as it came in multiplied forms ; of short rations and hard marches ; the lonely picket and the exciting skirmish ; the dreadful roar and crash of battle ; the wearisome days and sleepless nights when worn and exhausted, the body sought repose and shelter—the earth for a couch and the sky for a canopy—but evermore with the ministering angels of God tenderly watching over him; the painful anxiety for the loved ones at home ; the alternate hope and fear as to the prospect of meeting them

again on earth; and, more than all, the proud consciousness that this hardship and peril was being endured in the sacred cause of Freedom and Righteousness, and that the hour of victory however it might be delayed, was, in the good providence of the Almighty, sure to arrive. At last that eventful experience, culminated in a long and distressing illness and in death.

We have assembled to-day that we may gather up the fruitful lessons which this life and death inculcate; and when we shall have carried hence the worn out body let us strive to catch inspiration from the faithful study of the noble qualities which adorned and characterised the imperishable spirit.

Captain William F. Brigham, son of Francis and Sophia Brigham, was born in Feltonville, April 9, 1839, and having deceased February 6, 1865, was therefore 26 years of age, lacking 2 months and 3 days.

His earliest years were spent in this village. Here he formed ties which were ever strong and sacred. And it is no mean testimony to his moral and intellectual worth that he was trusted and beloved by those who had known him from childhood.

The least eventful part of his life was his boyhood, and I must pass over that rapidly. In his thirteenth year he was a pupil in the academy in this town, then under the care of that veteran and respected teacher Hon. O. W. Albee. In the spring and summer of 1864 he attended school at Monson. During the autumn and winter of 1854-5 he was a member of the Grammar school of this village. In the spring and summer of 1856 he left home again, but this time to become a scholar at Fort Edward. The autumn and winter of 1856-7 he spent at Monson. The summer of 1857 found him at the Hudson River Institute. He returned in season to accept for the winter term charge of the North School of this town. Said an individual who was a pupil of his, and who is employed as a teacher in one of the schools of Marlborough, "I re-

garded William F. Brigham as the best teacher I have ever had." During the remainder of 1858 he studied under the direction of Rev. L. E. Wakefield, and he invariably accorded to that gentleman, scholar and christian, the largest measure of credit as a teacher and an adviser. In 1859 he attended again at the Hudson River Institute, and during the autumn and winter of that year and the spring of 1860 he was a member of the Academy at Exeter, N. Hampshire. In the autumn of 1860 he entered Tuft's College, where he continued until July, 1862. During the winter previous to leaving college he taught school No. 4 of this town, as before when he sustained the relation of teacher, giving general satisfaction.

In the meantime the rebellion of the Southern States startled the country. To a young man constituted as he was, it was not possible to remain an indifferent spectator. I have read a letter which he wrote to a friend, July 22, 1862, in which he stated his determination to volunteer in the army, and gave at some length his opinion of national affairs. Said he: "Had government taken a bold and decisive stand at the outset; declared the emancipation of the slaves, I think the war would have been ended ere this. Such a step now might avert the ruin which impends. If the Government must go down, which heaven forbid! better go down with a glorious proclamation in behalf of an oppressed race for its epitaph, than to do so denying the rights of humanity."

Soon after this letter was written, i. e. August 27, 1862, he enlisted in the U. S. Army, and at once, with characteristic ardor, by private and by public appeals threw his whole soul into the business of recruiting.

He found some of his companions—a few of whom like himself were born and reared in this community, and who were much attached to him—ready to share the hardships, perils and honors of the soldier's life.

I think no one has entered the Union army with a

clearer understanding of the tremendous issues involved in the contest. He was unwilling that the Government should be destroyed and the country divided ; but he had not the slightest sympathy with those who were striving to maintain the unity of the nation and also to preserve the accursed system of human bondage which had been the teeming cause of all our national woes. He was a decided, unflinching, uncompromising friend and advocate of universal and impartial freedom.

Had this war been continued on the same plan on which it was originally conducted I know not but his life would have been sacrificed in vain. But the people and their rulers had learned righteousness in the school of defeat and humiliation ; at last came the decree of the President, by which the slaves of rebels were declared free, and the whole power of the nation pledged to make good that declaration. From that hour, our departed friend regarded this war as sacred as any ever waged since the foundations of earth were laid. I can give you no better evidence of his lofty patriotism and unquenchable courage, than this, that he enlisted in the dark days of the struggle, for the entire war, without the inducement of high bounties ; and that throughout his term of service he shared in the sufferings and dangers of the most severe and trying campaigns in which our armies have been engaged, without regret for the decision he had made, and without despair of the ultimate success of the cause of truth and freedom.

I have thus traced, necessarily with brevity, the life of him whom we mourn to-day, to the period of his entering the service of the U. S. Government, to assist in suppressing the foul treason which was threatening its safety.

It is my purpose now to give a concise yet comprehensive statement of the various operations in which his regiment was employed ; for the history of its work will be substantially a record of his toils.

For the main facts of this narrative, I am greatly indebted to the official reports of the commanders of the regiment. It has already been intimated that the deceased was active and efficient in raising the company with which he has been so long identified. Soon after going into camp, the executive of the State, recognizing his merits and promise, commissioned him First Lieutenant. This commission bore date August 22, 1862.

The 36th Mass. Vol., to which his Co. was attached, left Worcester for Washington, embarking on the Steamer Merrimack, on the 2d of September, 1862, and arrived at the Capital on the 7th of September, where it received orders to join Gen. McClellan's army. On the 7th of October it marched to Pleasant Valley, over the mountains, the roads having been obstructed by the rebels. On the 11th of October it was sent to Frederick, Md., which it was ordered to protect from any attack by Stuart's Cavalry, which was then making a raid around the entire army of the Potomac.—October 26th, it crossed the Potomac on a pontoon at Berlin, Md., marched to Lovettsville, Virginia, and encamped at night, cold, wet and weary. About this time new life was given to the men by the announcement that Gen. Burnside had been appointed to the command of that noble army.

Before crossing into Virginia, our lamented friend wrote home as follows: "Pleasant Valley, Md., Oct. 17, 1862. You tell me to keep up good courage. My courage never flags. My spirits are ever buoyant.—My faith never wavers.

I contemplate the future without a shudder. It shall never be said of me, He faltered in the hour of danger. If I cannot return to the dear ones I left, I can at least give you the consolation of knowing that I died like a man.

If sadness ever fills my heart it is at the reflection that loved ones at home will miss me, should I never

more return. Indulge no fears should I fall. Life's transitory scenes will soon be o'er to us all. I can but precede you a few years soon passed!

We shall very soon, perhaps before this reaches you, receive the shock of battle. If the cause stands, it matters not who falls."

Noble sentiment! Let it be the epitaph chiselled upon the marble that shall mark the spot where his dust shall repose. But many a duty and hardship lay before him in the future, whose secrets were known only to Him who controls men and events.

Oct. 29, the regiment with the remainder of the grand army, continued its march to Warrenton and Falmouth, where it arrived Nov. 19. During one week of this march, the men subsisted on two ears of corn each, per day the supply train having been cut off.

The regiment did picket duty on the Rappahannock till Dec. 12, when it crossed over into Fredericksburg.

While near Warrenton he wrote, Nov. 16, as follows: Dear Father and Mother:—The grave is gathering in many of our men. I see those every day who have fatal diseases mining at the seat of life. Have no uneasiness about me.

It would be inexpressibly pleasant to meet you once more, but if this cannot be, I will wait your coming, ye fondly cherished ones, on the other side of the river!

Well, Thanksgiving soon comes. O that I could gather with you, as I have in past years, around the Thanksgiving board! But duty keeps me here, and I cheerfully stand at my post. Leave a vacant chair at the Thanksgiving table for me, and if then alive, on the 27th of November, at 1 o'clock P. M., I will be spiritually with you."

Be assured that in no spirit of lightness, but in soberness and faith was this tender message sent.

During the battle of Fredericksburg, the regiment was held in reserve on the bank of the river. On the night of the 15th, it re-crossed the river and occupied its old camp.

Writing to his parents from this place, and under very trying circumstances, he says: "If the cause which commands my love and best efforts is finally triumphant, I accept willingly the hardships and sacrifices which attend its vindication." And he closes thus: "Your letter, father, was read three times, and I have it with me to read again. No lover ever prized letters from the object of his love more than I do your's. And your handwriting, mother, is more often seen than any other. God bless you for your faithful remembrance."

Jan. 30th, 1863, he was commissioned as captain in place of Capt. Hastings, deceased. But the scene of his labors was to be changed. Feb. 10th the regiment left for Newport News, where the ninth army corps encamped and drilled for six weeks. Then the division to which the 36th Mass. belonged was ordered West. March 29th the regiment arrived at Lexington, Kentucky, and for awhile marched and countermarched across that State in pursuit of guerillas.

On the night of June 7th it started for Vicksburg, Miss., to assist in Gen. Grant's operations. In ten days time the ninth Corps was in position, ten miles in the rear of Vicksburg, charged with the duty of preventing the reinforcement of the besieged garrison.

Vicksburg fell July 4th, and the next day began a pursuit of the rebel General Johnson's forces, which were compelled to evacuate Jackson, the capital of the State. This terrible march under a tropical sun was fatal to many of the men. Without rations, they marched until some fell dead in the ranks, and nearly all were exhausted. About half the Division went into the hospital.

The Mississippi campaign was a severe one for the 36th, worse than half-a-dozen battles in a moderate climate would have been. From the effects of it the records show that the regiment lost full fifty men by death, and twice that number by discharge. And we shall see that the constitution of Capt. Brigham re-

ceived its first serious shock in that terrible campaign. Leaving its sick—which numbered nearly three-fourths of the whole—at many hospitals by the way, the regiment returned to Kentucky; and on the 10th of September left for East Tennessee, reaching Morristown after a march of one hundred and forty miles.

The next prominent place at which we find these toiling faithful men is Knoxville. From thence they made frequent expeditions after guerillas, losing some valuable men, but inflicting considerable damage upon the enemy.

On the 20th of October the regiment went into winter quarters at Lenoir's; but on the 14th of November the approach of Longstreet made it necessary to fall back upon Knoxville. For lack of transportation, nearly all the regimental baggage was destroyed—a sad loss as subsequent events proved. Constant skirmishing and some casualties ensued as the men retreated. Finally the Union forces drew up around Knoxville—the brigade in which the 36th was, occupying Fort Saunders and the rifle pits to the east of it during the siege. The rebels made repeated and furious assaults upon this part of our lines but were always repulsed with great slaughter.

While the siege was progressing the men suffered much from cold, hunger, want of clothing and of sleep. When not on picket they were in the rifle pits. Quarter rations only were issued, and many lacked blankets and shoes, and nearly all overcoats. At last, on the 4th of December, the enemy baffled in his designs, raised the siege and retreated. A forced march in pursuit revealed the fact that Longstreet had met heavy reinforcements, and it was deemed useless to attack him.

The regiment had comparative quiet for some time after the memorable siege of Knoxville. While in East Tennessee, Capt. Brigham wrote a letter in which he referred to a rumor that there was to be peace by compromise, among other things guaranteeing amnesty

to the leading traitors. Under date of Feb. 5, 1864, he said : " I sincerely hope such a monstrous proposition will not be entertained a single instant. In the name of Justice and Humanity let the war go on until every purpose started with, and every purpose the struggle has developed are fully accomplished. The least recompense for our sacrifices we can honorably be satisfied with is the condign punishment of the authors and leaders of the Rebellion, and the establishment of universal Freedom."

Feb. 11th, in expectation of being ordered East, he wrote to his Father as follows : " I cannot conceal the pleasure I should feel to take you once more by the hand, ere I go into the terrible campaigns of the present year. It would give happiness beyond measure to visit my native village after so long an absence. I long to see the dear old home, to look into the old familiar faces once more. If this privilege is denied me, I shall continue faithful to the good cause I have sworn to serve unto the end, in the hope that when the Union shall have triumphed over all its enemies I may meet you once more to comfort and sustain the declining years of your life.

I have no anxiety about the tenure of my own life, yet it is sometimes with fear and trembling that I read the letter from home, fearful lest it reveal the loss of some dear one there.

While the regiment was at Strawberry Plains, East Tennessee, there was a period when, as I have learned from official sources, the rations of the men were six spoonfuls of flour for seven days, and what corn could be picked up from under the feet of the mules and horses !

I am constrained to omit all account of expeditions after guerillas and skirmishes with small bodies of the enemy—minor affairs to be sure—but involving many a weary march and desperate struggle.

March 21st, the regiment commenced its famous

journey over the Cumberland Mountains to Nicholasville, Kentucky—a distance of one hundred and ninety-eight miles. Now remember its long and toilsome marches back and forth through Kentucky and Tennessee, prior to this march over the mountains,—remember that before entering upon its campaign in East Tennessee, it had marched an aggregate distance of one thousand and thirteen miles, and had been transported an aggregate distance of four thousand, three hundred and twenty-eight miles, and you can form some conception of a portion of the sacrifices which this noble man and his comrades have cheerfully and unselfishly made for our common country. April 1st it reached Nicholasville, where it took the cars for Annapolis which it reached on the 6th. Here it was expected that after the trying campaign through which it had gone, the regiment would be allowed a rest of several weeks; but after remaining only seventeen days, orders came to reinforce Gen. Grant, who was then about to commence his great movement against the army of Gen. Lee.

May 5th, the regiment crossed the Rapidan, and the following day was engaged in the sanguinary battle of the Wilderness, in which it charged the enemy three times, losing heavily. In that struggle, Col. Draper, who is with us to-day, received a severe and painful wound.

Let me digress a moment to relate an incident of that contest which I am sure will interest many of this community. Our army had occasion to change its position, and volunteers were called for to go out upon the field of carnage under the enemy's fire, and bring in such wounded as might have been left.

A few gallant men of the 36th offered to perform this perilous service. While thus employed one of them was struck by the fatal bullet of the sharpshooter and was himself borne away upon the stretcher which he had assisted to carry from camp. Near where he fell they have buried him, and in that far off grave re-

poses the lust of a diligent and faithful soldier—
George E. Nourse.

But to return to the narrative of the doings of the regiment, May 12th, it was engaged in the battle of Spottsylvania Court House, in which it lost severely. From this time, to the date of the admission of Capt. Brigham to the hospital, the 36th was skirmishing almost daily with the enemy.

I had omitted to state that in the latter part of March he was ordered home to recruit for the regiment. But soon after he arrived he was prostrated by severe illness. He remained at home about six weeks when he returned to the seat of war, though still far from enjoying his usual vigorous health.

Under date of June 6, 1864, he writes from camp of the 36th, nine miles from Richmond: "I have been quite ill since I last wrote. I could get no medicine—nothing but exposure and hardship. The Surgeon proposed to send me to the rear, to an army hospital, but I am determined to remain with the regiment, and do what I can to bring the present campaign to a successful issue. While we survey, in sadness of heart, the thousands of new made graves where our comrades lie, still we remember proudly that, as yet, no backward step has been taken." This was his last letter while with the regiment.

The next was dated City Point, June 24th, and was addressed, "Dear Father and Mother: I am at present stopping at this place, and am unfit for active field duty: I shall try to go to Washington, to-morrow, where I hope for quiet, and a regular and decent diet for a short time, which is needed to make me strong and capable as a soldier. I made a mistake in not remaining at home a few days longer until I had recovered all my original strength and flesh. I have felt the influence of that sickness more or less ever since, or in other words, I have never fully recovered from it. I intend to take

things patiently, trusting Providence that all will come out right in the end."

By reference to the official report of the Surgeon in charge, I find that he was admitted to the Officer's Hospital at Annapolis, Md., June 29th, 1864. On the 22d of September he wrote: "I still linger in the hospital, though I am tired and disgusted with hospital life." Nov. 18th he writes again, to say: "I suppose you have been expecting a letter from me for some time. The reason of my silence was, I have been very sick. The lack of many little attentions I had received at home, with the loneliness of my situation, added to some existing debility of system, brought me very low. For several days I was kept up by stimulants. I had expected to pass away from earth, and I confess I shuddered not at the prospect of meeting her, who for long years has been but a fond and sacred memory—the dear mother that bore me. I am improving now, and hope to recover my health ere long. I contracted this malaria during the campaign in Miss., it is the same thing which so shattered my company after those operations near Vicksburg and Jackson." The last letter he wrote home bears date January 4th, 1865. He speaks of the temporary absence of Wilbur, his twin brother, who for weeks, by day and night, had most faithfully and affectionately ministered to his wants.—And he adds: "I had hoped to be able to start home with him by this time, but the last month of constant bad weather has been unfavorable for me, and I am in no condition to travel a long distance yet. When Wilbur first came, I was recovering as fast as I could expect, but unfortunately my disease took an adverse turn. I hope to get strength enough to leave here before long. It is useless for me to state that I am sick and disgusted with this hospital life, but I see no other way to do, but to be patient and hopeful, always looking for a change for the better."

But He without whose notice not even a sparrow

can fall, had decreed that the change, when it came, should release him finally from earthly trials, and usher him into that sphere in which there is no war, nor rumors of war, where the inhabitants never say "I am sick," and where sorrow and sighing are never known.

He had many opportunities of communicating with his brother Wilbur during those weary hours of watching and suffering. He spoke often of home and its associations. At one time, referring to the ancient fraternity with which he was connected, he said: "If a brother Mason was true to his obligations, an own relative could not be more devoted in the hour of trial."—He received much assistance from the brotherhood in his sickness, and his last hours were soothed by their kind attentions. His departure leaves a sad vacaney in the band of brethren, but as the circle become smaller, let those that remain in the flesh, join hands and hearts in a tenderer fellowship, sustained by the hope, that in a holier realm, each missing link of the dissevered chain will be restored.

The generous and unselfish impulses of our friend, bound him to every philanthropic enterprise. For some years he was an honored and useful member of Feltonville Division Sons of Temperance. I have been favored with the reading of a manuscript, written and subscribed by him, on the 17th of March, 1854, in which he solemnly promises to abstain from the use of all intoxicating drunks. All that was reformatory and elevating, found an enthusiastic advocate in him. The high moral tone of his character saved him from the vices which fetter and ruin so many promising young men.

Engine Company, No. 3, of Feltonville, composed, as it always has been, of the foremost citizens of the neighborhood, was proud to acknowledge him as one of its most active and efficient members. I recall the friendly words he spoke on the morning he left home for the seat of war, when he thanked you, gentlemen,

for your kind escort on that occasion. With a voice tremulous with emotion, he said :—“ Comrades, after seven years of happy companionship with you, I bid you an affectionate farewell !”

Again you have tendered an escort, but to-day you will assist in performing for him the last service which the living can perform for the dead ; and I doubt not that as you stand by his open grave, the moan of the wintry winds will seem to bear to your hearts the echo of that touching farewell !

Here to-day are assembled also a few of his comrades in arms. Faithful soldiers of a grateful republic, your friend and companion has heard the glad reveille which has called him to higher duties and brighter scenes. He has received his last marching orders, has struck his tent, and has obeyed the summons to that clime, lovelier far than poets sing, where the roar of cannon and peal of musketry shall never disturb his sacred peace. The memory of him who has laid down his life for our country will be kept fresh and green by every succeeding generation of his countrymen !

Last autumn, when he thought himself almost at the portals of death, he indited a few lines to the dear kindred whom he cherished with undying affection.

And no words of mine, if never so carefully chosen and earnestly spoken, can appeal to their hearts like that message from his own lips.

“ To you, dear ones of the family circle, I return the sincere gratitude of my heart for your life-long and affectionate kindness. With undying love, I will cherish your memories until we meet again. Yes, believe it, we shall meet again ! I only precede you a little in entering the mysterious realms of shade. With truest love to you each and all, I bid you an affectionate, and a last good bye !”

Finally the summons came, and as he had often done before, he yielded obedience to the mandate of superior Authority, and advanced to take his place in that long and silent procession, which the veil of eternity con-

ceals from mortal view. I could not, if I would disclose all the incidents of that last scene, when the spirit fluttered in its tenement, impatient for its flight. It was nearly eight o'clock in the evening, when his brother having lain by his side,—the dying man aroused him : " WILBUR, DO YOU SEE THIS BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE ?" The reply was, " WHAT LANDSCAPE ?" Instantly he responded, " THIS, ALL AROUND US ! "

I know not how much of the bliss, and glory of heaven had been unfolded to his enraptured vision !—Perhaps he had beheld what thrilled the soul of the poet, when he wrote :—

" Sweet fields beyond the swelling floods,
Stand dressed in living green."

Later he said : " Wilbur, I go to greet our Mother ! 'Tis but a little in advance of the rest." And he expressed his desire to be buried in the family lot, beside the form of her who bore him, and to whom he ever referred with a deep and abiding tenderness, which adds immortal lustre to his memory.

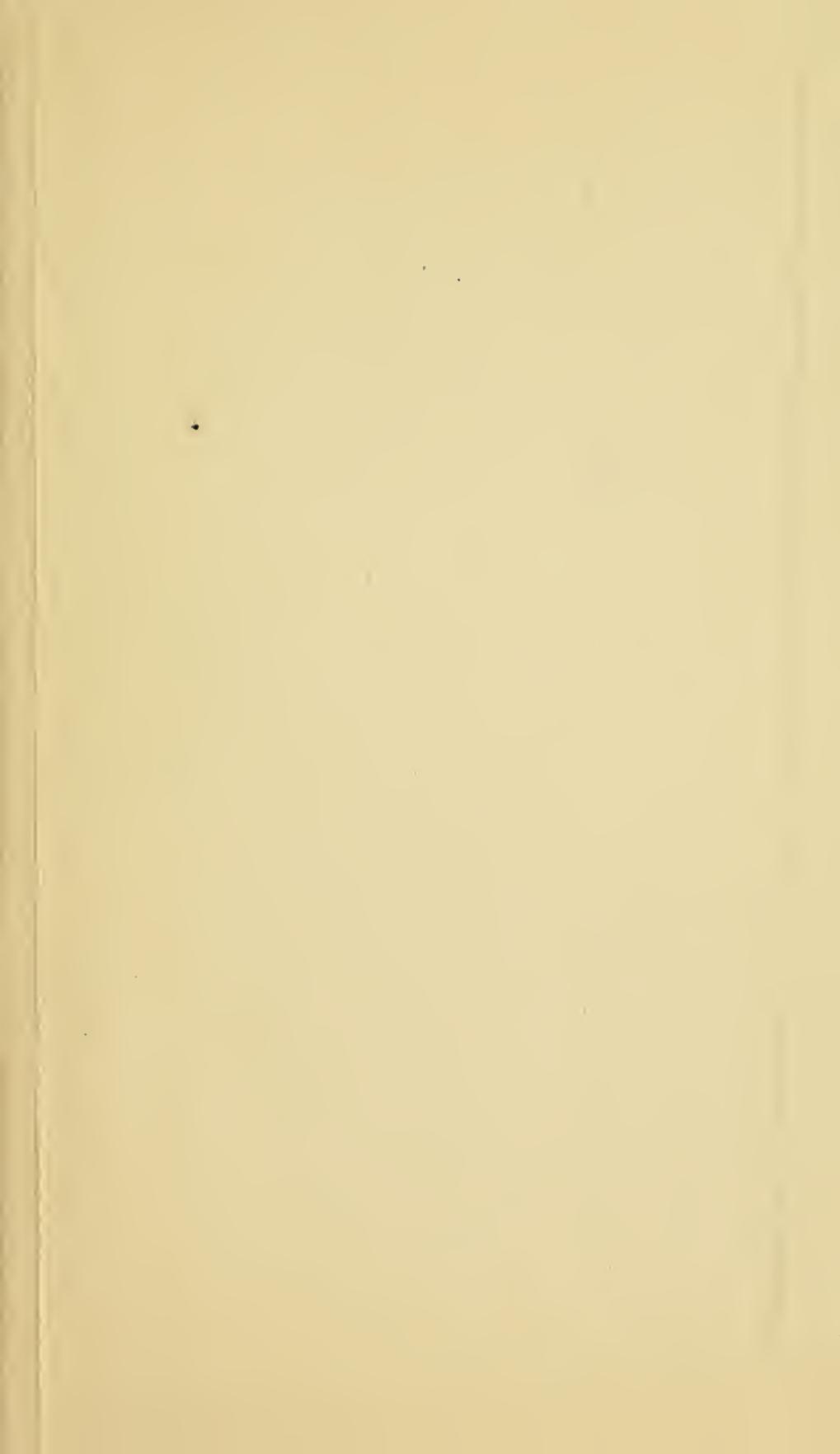
At last, the final struggle came to the weary worn out soldier. His faithful attendant, painfully solicitous to catch his last utterance, bent over him, and besought him to speak yet once more ! Alas, the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak ! A tear fell upon his pale, hollow cheek, but the lips were dumb ! Away from home and family, and the blissful scenes of his youth, it seemed hard to die thus ! And yet could he have responded to that brother's appeal, might he not have said :—

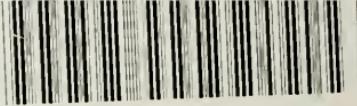
" How little reck it where men die,
When once the moment's passed,
In which the dim and glazing eye,
Has looked on earth its last ?
Whether within the sculptured urn,
Or coffin's cell, they rest,
Or in their nakedness, return
Back to their mother's breast ?

'Twere sweet, indeed, to close our eyes,
With those we cherish near,
And, wafted upward by their sighs,
Soar to a happier sphere ;
Yet, whether on the scaffold high,
Or in the battle's van,
The fittest place where man can die
IS WHERE HE DIES FOR MAN !"

In the assurance that though this young and fair life has been freely poured out, yet, since he served his country and the cause of Freedom, and died in their behalf, he neither lived nor died in vain. I do most confidently exhort this sorrowing circle of friends to trust in the ever blessed Father who hath given and taken away; and since they loved him living, and mourn his early departure, let them cherish with gratitude, affection and hope the memory of William F. Brigham.







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